

6/18/13 VR LC Video Conference

Mark: VR LC members presented their team's priorities. Pat and Mark will consolidate the statewide priorities (won't probably use team specific priorities), enter on survey monkey and all of you will have an opportunity to vote for priorities which we will look at next meeting. The Fishbone model or some other model may be used to get to the root of the problems.

Omaha/South

1. Lack of marketing materials and direction. (was addressed in the last team meeting w/ Mark; it's moving along quite nicely)
2. (Tie)
 - a. Inequitable Work distribution.
 - b. Inadequate customer service at first contact on phone or in person. (office is a bit large and have a variety of individuals who answer/greet people so we're trying to work on customer service)
3. Low referral sources. (# of referral sources, work with Workforce, Stevens Center, want to increase the # of referrals sources to we have a larger amounts of resources coming in)
4. Conflicts between career counselors and placement staff with regard to expectations and roles.
5. Poor response from VR Administrative Staff to frightening or unfortunate events experienced by Omaha Staff. (unique to Omaha being in larger city, we had a series of unfortunate circumstances happening to this office and how it was acknowledged and addressed; staff were very frightened and it would be helpful to have had an email or v/c that said, "I'm sorry you're going through this" and that "we are empathetic to the situations." vs. no response).

Omaha/Downtown

1. Develop a more effective way to market Nebraska VR services to businesses, consumers and community agencies (what do we want to say/who do we want to say it to) (Marketing was discussed at team tour so I think we're okay with that)
2. Improve successful employment outcomes (we do a lot of apps @ Omaha Downtown and have to find a way to turn applicants into successful outcomes; we want those to turn into jobs)
3. Strengthen business partnerships (for purposes of OJE or OJT opportunities as well as employment)
4. Develop quality referral sources (we have a lot of referrals sources but we want to get better at what we do)
5. Expand our community resource base (Pantry that does an excellent job of getting resources to people but we want to have more)

Omaha/West

1. Communication between State and Field Offices (sometimes priorities are different from state office vs. at the field offices; input being valued. Committees, marketing — Staff put a lot of time into checklists but we don't always see what has happened in those areas)
2. Disability Agency but training isn't focused on disabilities (we are the experts on disabilities but Med Aspects is the only training on disabilities)
3. Staff Turnover (lot of turnover in placement)
4. QE2 Issues (reports for associates)

5. Hearing Aid Policy (no other disability has a stipulation on it on whether you are eligible for services; don't know the reason behind that; doesn't seem fair)

Lincoln/Rathjen

1. Lack of marketing materials and presentations using iPads with success stories (marketing has been addressed)
2. Staff retention (seems like staff turnover happens a lot on Lincoln teams; did not talk at team meeting of why staff are leaving; did talk about it at last VR LC meeting)
3. Hiring process (out of our hands; takes awhile; could the process be expedited?)
4. Staff training for new employees
5. Unable to track information with employers between placement specialists (placement specialists on 3 Lincoln teams felt like could share between themselves then they could be more effective in working with employers)

Lincoln/Jenkins

(Posted after the meeting)

1. Communication-straight answers would be welcome; gossip/rumor control is needed; are we 1 team or 3?
 2. Lack of uniform processes across/within teams; defined team roles are needed; caseloads are not equitable.
 3. QE2/VRIS issues-make more user friendly with a spotlight feature (for VRIS); technology that works.
 4. Training-need consistency in training new staff on our team; keep information updated on VRIS
 5. Leaders need to lead by example; ethics/integrity is needed.
- Other areas mentioned included lack of resources to address the increasing number of referrals who experience autism and increase employer relationships.

Lincoln/Miller

Communication between teams, i.e., Search, Certificate Programs — is it in the office or across the state?

Relationship with EasterSeals and Benefits Analysis, taking a really long time to get those assigned for completion especially in the Lincoln Office

Placement and JSS classes (there's been discussion on the team; right now JSS happens as a service after plan written; discussion was wondering if that could be an assessment service as it could be beneficial for clients prior to writing the plan or moving into placement)

Relationship with SS and how long it takes to get back to us (don't know if it is just Lincoln but send off for QY and takes a long time to get back; it sometimes takes as long as a month)

Referrals in office (not the #s of referrals but conflicts on how they are handled and recorded and split up between teams)

Norfolk/Mitchell

Team issues identified and prioritized: No particular order but postsecondary is probably #1 —

a. Feedback from post secondary college consumers to let us know what vocational planning was the most beneficial for them, what we could improve in etc. (This is #1; Senate hearing on

June 20 workforce development; House passed a bill; it may happen this time; Senator Harkin retiring so he would like to see something happen in this area before he retires; could impact transition services, separate S&I, we might have track some different things, don't know what final bill will look like; talk about tracking particular degree and did they get a job in that field; may have to wait to see how all of this plays out)

- b. Getting the Video equipment to work in So. Sioux City office for they can participate in monthly training session and all office/ team meetings. (cost a lot of \$\$\$ so they doubt that will happen soon)
- c. IT person come to offices on a regular/consistent basis to handle computer/printer problems.
- d. Employment Warranty: Clarification on how to present to consumers, appropriate letter or do we have post employment services at this time to offer? (Mark mentioned on schedule to post employment services August 1; training goes out to offices soon, opportunity to ID training you want to go to, old system vs. new system will be addressed; if it is not address, we will include in next discussion)
- e. Updated office furniture in both So. Sioux City office and Norfolk. (addressed in team tour)
- f. For those employees who do not work Friday, can they wear jeans on Thursday?

Norfolk/Griffin

- 1.) Demonstrating/actualizing our agency values of respect and integrity as we are working with or speaking about our consumers, co-workers, team members, and other agency personnel.
- 2.) Employment Success Skills. This is on the plan and many of our consumers could benefit from it, but is it getting done? Who is responsible for this? When should it start? Is there training for staff?
- 3.) The strict eligibility guidelines for consumers with hearing impairments. (felt same as OW)
- 4.) Develop a "best practice" for consumers who are considered homeless, as they are looking for employment. This has come up recently, we are working with someone and they become homeless, then what?
- 5.) Getting quality referrals in rural areas.

Columbus/Fremont (some of this has been discussed about since our meeting)

- 1. Lack of ways to market ourselves.
- 2. Client motivation
- 3. Too much emphasis on outcome
- 4. Pay – Perhaps more incentives instead of just COLA (concern across the board esp. in staff retention)
- 5. Wellness — Staff would like to be able to have incentives for workout, i.e., earn 30 mins of paid leave for fitness
- 6. QE2
- 7. New Staff Training (couldn't really remember but probably timing — too late in process; how to get immediate support to new staff; training always held in Lincoln; rescheduled staff training and required staff being here for 2 weeks or an extended period of time)
- 8. Communication

North Platte

- 1. Not being able to use comp time for exempt and non-exempt staff
- 2. Too much time spent on paperwork for re-opening what used to be considered EW cases

3. Not enough physical referrals (referrals of people with physical disabilities)
4. Distance and time it takes to serve such a wide area of clients
5. When closing a case — having to re-enter primary source of support

Kearney (no one attended LC meeting from Kearney)

1. Consistency/Respect - There have been occurrences lately where clients have disagreed with their counselor/specialist regarding what is a reasonable job goal and what should be authorized for supports. Is this a CAP issue or office director issue? More often than not, the client is transferred to another counselor/specialist that will go ahead and approve the job goal and authorize for the previously requested supports. Team feels that this is avoiding the real issue and demonstrates a lack of respect and consistency within the team.
2. AgrAbility - Team feels that they lack a clear definition in regards to what is VR's role in serving clients that work with this program.
3. Communication - This specifically pertains to processes on how clients are transferred from office to office. Would like more collaboration and discussion between counselors/specialists for continuity of care when a client decides to transfer services to another office.
4. Training - Job coaches lacking real knowledge and understanding of disability. Team also feels that many job coaches do not have sufficient training in coaching and don't understand job development.
5. Marketing - Concern over lack of referrals. Would like to see greater demand of VR services in the areas we serve. Seeing more referrals for behavioral health and less for physical disabilities. Team understands that this is a sensitive topic, but felt like was worth noting again as this is a problem area.

Grand Island

1. Develop criteria on how the dashboard of statistics will be used. The emphasis has been that staff function as a State Team. Will the dashboard of statistics make how we function more individualized and how will the information be used on performance evaluations? Will the dashboard make teamwork stop and staff become more concerned about their own statistics? Will this cause competitiveness between staff (will that be good or bad)? (Mark asked for input on dashboard — — other than template Mark provided, what are others thinking? Transparencies? Not to be used as competitive-punitive means. But would like for everyone to see what is happening statewide. It may impact on performance but that is happening already. How do you feel about transparency? Joan expressed that caseloads are so different, some populations can be moved through process at different rates, caseload sizes, so many factors that are involved. Alyce felt like supervisors might use the dashboard differently so guidelines would help. Danielle: If you have #s driven supervisor, dashboard will be used for issues; didn't want it to get to that. Will everyone see it or will just the supervisor see it? Staff don't know now what is happening so it would give rationale to performance and how your team is performing. Elizabeth: cases that take a lot of time to place; not a lot of negative impact. Mark: There will be plenty of opportunities to give input and there is a positive of seeing where you are.)
2. Communication/Staff Changes — staff have not been included in decisions made or have not been given an opportunity to give input on office changes. Staff want to have more input on decisions that have an impact on how we function as a team.
3. Identify criteria of when a short or long-term job goal is appropriate for closure. Do we take a successful closure on a short-term job? Staff have been told they don't have "good" closures when they do this but are also told it is okay to take the closure. Is this rehabilitation if we take

the short-term job goal? More of a discussion on outcome vs. rehab rate - how do they compare? (compare to? — — what is strongest emphasis? Take a short term job goal?)

4. Internal Openings – Openings are listed as external – who makes the decision to have a position listed as internal or external? Staff would like to see the openings internal first. How do staff become aware of and have time to train for openings within offices. There is no time to be trained to get ready to apply for a position. Other times it seems like a staff person is pre-selected (groomed) for a future position or more of an opportunity to mentor with someone and that person is given in-office training to prepare them for the job. The person was then chosen. (Does the scoring system for a position take into account tenure and job performance? How does a staff person get selected to sit in on interviews and how does the scoring system work)

5. Technical training – Need to continue training for local computer techs so we have strong local tech support capabilities. The Computer Techs do ongoing training for other staff after the initial training sessions. Staff want multiple modes of training to include individual, hands on, group, online and written instructions.

Other issues:

- *Trust issues – trusting work will get done, hand off of work between specialists and work given to associates.

- *Customer Service for clients (Quality vs. Quantity)

- *Clarification on job duties – we do not need to change job duties every time a new person is hired. Staff feel like we should hire for the position that is open.

- *Using MI with clients and staff

- *Even out the workloads

Scottsbluff

1. Providing transition placement services pre-plan. (more clarification with federal regs; Mark M. will discuss with them Wed.)
2. Receiving transition applications with signature dates that cross quarter cutoff dates.
3. Clients not maintaining contact. (throughout process at different points in the process, clients don't maintain contact and they want to explore why; how much is Scottsbluff using MI? Nicole and some others are using it and have been discussing it in staff meeting; has MI helped with contacts? I think so. Maybe it's situational, i.e., not having minutes on their phone, etc.)
4. Incorporating short-term employment goals and long-term employment goals with the VR process to include completion of plan, etc.

Program

1. Inaccurate assignment of clients among the three priority groups. At April meeting, we had final S&I report from previous FY, one standard relates to percentage individuals with a significant disabilities agency is serving- - Priority Group 2 or 3; anticipated downtrend when we went of OOS but we are getting a little nervous about going below that standard as an agency; there were teams below that standard; some disparity among distribution of some teams; coming across SE cases that were not put in Priority Group 1
2. What is the role of career planning (Short-term vs. long-term goals)? (What is maximizing employment?)
3. Why are we re-opening cases after several unsuccessful cases? (What are some of the reasons for doing that? How do we address that?)

4. Increasing the use of MI techniques on a regular basis while also reducing the client's feelings of being overwhelmed by the VR process.
5. Perceived workload inequities. How to measure and address inequities? (How do we get an understanding of inequities?) (People assume it is inequitable but staff don't know what the distribution is. Having the discussion would be important.)

Data Center

1. QE2 Training
2. Office Noise (Data Center are on the phone w/ staff, does that bother other staff with that noise?)
3. Storage Space

Marketing/Fiscal

1. Promote sharing of exemplary methods, processes, and ideas statewide to achieve consistency among teams. (Gil sees a lot of things out in the offices and sees a lot of good practices, streamlined some things, should be a way to share that information among teams statewide; we think more consistency would be helpful which would improve our processes)
2. Make VRIS more user-friendly. (that is being addressed; Checklists are being rewritten and being worked on — hopefully out by October 1. Pat's done a great job of rewriting the Manual. Maybe all teams were updated at team tour.)
3. Nebraska VR News, the internal newsletter, is intended to be informational and takes much time and effort. We need to assure that people will read it.
4. We should be able to use co-workers as valued resources. We need to assure that staff are aware of co-workers' roles, especially within teams.
5. Communication is important between State Office and all other teams as well as within teams. We need to improve communication to be more timely, effective, and efficient.
6. Socialization is necessary to form connections to promote work engagement. We need to Marketing stood out as a top priority.

Mark's update and already working on:

Marketing — Already talked about.

Data Dashboard has impact on workload distribution. (If you can see what it is, then you can perhaps understand why it is and then you can address it and make necessary changes).
Staff turnover and retention — we've tried to look at motivation, implemented flex scheduling, tuition reimbursement, recognition within what we have the ability to do. Do you have any ideas on staff turnover/retention at OW? (OW talked about placement specifically and that it turns over a lot, talked about pay. Are we recruiting the right people for that position (Placement)?
Employment Committee is working on the job description.

Teams don't have to wait for SO to come out and make changes. VR LC was started for leaders to make changes — doesn't have to start with SO. You are the leaders for your teams. LC will take input back to the teams and take ownership of the teams. The 3 Lincoln LC members met on their own and made changes in cross-teams, diversity training. They led. I would encourage all of you to do this. If there are social activities that you want to happen on your team, then take the initiative to set those up. You are the leader from your team because someone nominated you. You can make the difference.

Alyce: Staff who fill in for staff who leave. The process for hiring takes a long time. If you are assigned someone's duties and then you are doing your own work, and you do this for many months, something needs to be done to make the hiring process a bit faster. Training takes a while but it is hard on staff who take on those duties.

Columbus: Pay (Not a lot we can do within our structure due to part of state government and NDE; talked about some of this with Joel; what needs to be revisited as it doesn't seem to be understood by staff?)

Elizabeth: The dashboard and seeing what staff are doing and it's not to be used for competition. I've heard there is some complacency but there is no recognition for those people who are doing a lot. Is there recognition/opportunity for staff who are doing more? Could the dashboard be used for recognition? Pay?

Wendy: If someone is needing so much recognition, then maybe they are burnt out on their job duties; they should be motivated to do well and do their best regardless of recognition.

Danielle: Maybe it's opportunity vs. recognition. There is some internal motivation but there is, what is out there?

Comment: Sometimes you are too busy to be on committees, etc. because of work distribution.

Mark: Enlightening to hear opportunity vs. recognition. We don't have a lot of opportunity but how do we create those? How do we create opportunities? There is no pay for VR LC but you are instrumental in shaping my decision on policies/procedures. Are there are a lot of opportunities in the advancement of yourself in the organization? Probably not due to flattening the organization but you have more opportunity to work with staff. You have more direct contact with management but not the opportunity to move up. Mark looking for ways to get grants into the state for more opportunities and collaborate for grants in the states. What other opportunities would you like to see?

Tracey feels like you could make your own opportunities, look to share those opportunities, look to see how you could enhance the work yourself.

Elizabeth: Priority groups: Any plans for training for staff so we know what the issue is? Pat: We did an original training but new staff have been hired since then. Pat could meet with staff one-on-one or do a training who were not part of the original trainings. Subsequent indicators results that have come out show that the trend has ceased dropping but popped back up again. We're okay with that. If you have a need for training, just let me know.

Training: Mark: We have a work group that was established and Larry headed it up. We're now on the fourth proposal. One more proposal will come in. How decisions are made for training and who attends? NST? Mentoring programs. There are many things to be considered. Cheryl will be involved in this so when the Help Desk person is hired, then decisions on training will be made. One idea that came out of training is an Annual Academy where we would pull all staff together and train on policies and procedures. It would create more consistency. I think it

important to have an annual training to discuss policies/procedures. Use v/c to promote the learning. It would be a place to hear it at one place once a year.

Mark: We have the comments. We will consolidate a list of all except team-specific comments. We will send them out to you in a Survey Monkey survey so you can rank them in priority order for the upcoming LC meeting.

An LC member asked that the survey be sent out first in paper format to present to team and then respond on Survey Monkey.